



(19)

Europäisches Patentamt

European Patent Office

Office européen des brevets



(11)

EP 1 215 409 A2

(12)

EUROPEAN PATENT APPLICATION

(43) Date of publication:

19.06.2002 Bulletin 2002/25

(51) Int Cl.7: F16C 33/44, F16C 33/56

(21) Application number: 01129133.3

(22) Date of filing: 07.12.2001

(84) Designated Contracting States:

AT BE CH CY DE DK ES FI FR GB GR IE IT LI LU
MC NL PT SE TR

Designated Extension States:

AL LT LV MK RO SI

(30) Priority: 15.12.2000 JP 2000382236

(71) Applicant: Minebea Co., Ltd.
Kitasaku-gun, Nagano-ken 3849-2100 (JP)

(72) Inventors:

- HokkI Igawa, Kazuo
Yonezawa-shi, Yamagata-ken 992-0053 (JP)
- Obara, Rikuro, c/o Minebea Co., Ltd.,
Kitasaku-gun, Nagano-ken 3849-2100 (JP)
- Akiyama, Motoharu, c/o Minebea Co., Ltd.,
Kitasaku-gun, Nagano-ken 3849-2100 (JP)

(74) Representative: Goddar, Heinz J., Dr.

FORRESTER & BOEHMERT
Pettenkoferstrasse 20-22
80336 München (DE)

(54) Material for bearing retainer

(57) There is provided a porous material suitable for use in a bearing retainer, having such properties as a small contraction ratio of the dimensions of a formed workpiece to those of a finished product, excellent hot oil resistance, small contraction change, insusceptibility to damage, light weight, a long service life, and ability to retain oil and grease for a long period of time.

The porous material suitable for use in the bearing retainer is obtained by a process comprising the steps of mixing degreased bran derived from rice bran with a thermosetting resin before kneading, subjecting a

kneaded mixture to a primary firing in an inert gas at a temperature in a range of 700 to 1000°C, pulverizing the kneaded mixture after fired into carbonized powders sieved through a 60-mesh screen, mixing the carbonized powders with a thermosetting resin before kneading, pressure-forming a kneaded mixture thus obtained at a pressure in a range of 20 to 30 MPa, and applying a heat treatment again to a formed kneaded mixture in the inert gas at a temperature in a range of 100 to 1100°C.

EP 1 215 409 A2

Description

[0001] The present invention relates to a porous material suitable for use in a bearing retainer, obtained by a process comprising the steps of mixing degreased bran derived from rice bran with a thermosetting resin before kneading, subjecting a kneaded mixture to a primary firing in an inert gas at a temperature in a range of 700 to 1000°C, pulverizing the kneaded mixture obtained after the primary firing into carbonized powders sieved through a 60-mesh screen, mixing the carbonized powders with a thermosetting resin before kneading, pressure-forming a kneaded mixture thus obtained at a pressure in a range of 20 to 30 MPa, and applying a heat treatment again to a formed kneaded mixture in the inert gas at a temperature in a range of 100 to 1100°C.

[0002] Glass-fiber reinforced polyamide such as Nylon 66 reinforced by glass fiber, metal, and so forth have been in widespread use up to now as material for a retainer of bearings such as ball bearings, taper bearings, and so forth. As a lubricating oil such as oil, grease, and the like is used for these bearings, a hot-oil-resistant Nylon 66 blended with a lubricating-oil resistant-stabilizer has been used for Nylon 66 for use in retainers.

[0003] However, even such a hot-oil-resistant Nylon 66 has been unable to withstand applications thereof at a high temperature on a long term basis, and accordingly, various improvements have been attempted.

[0004] Meanwhile, an attempt to obtain a porous carbonaceous material by utilizing rice bran, discharged in quantity of 90,000 tons a year in Japan, and as much as 33 million tons throughout the world, has been well known by researches carried out by Mr. Kazuo HOKKIRIGAWA, the first inventor of the present invention (refer to "Functional Material", May issue, 1997, Vol. 17, No. 5, pp. 24 ~ 28).

[0005] Herein are disclosed a carbonaceous material obtained by mixing and kneading degreased bran derived from rice bran with a thermosetting resin, drying a formed kneaded mixture prepared by pressure-forming, and firing the formed kneaded mixture as dried in an inert gas, and a method of forming the same.

[0006] With such a method as described above, however, it has been practically difficult to form the formed kneaded mixture with precision because there occurs discrepancy in dimensions by as much as 25% in terms of a contraction ratio of the dimensions of the formed kneaded mixture prepared by the pressure-forming to those of a finished formed product obtained after the firing in the inert gas.

[0007] The Invention has been developed to solve the problem described above, and it is therefore an object of the invention to provide a porous material suitable for use in a bearing retainer, having such properties as a small contraction ratio of the dimensions of a formed workpiece to those of a finished product, excellent hot oil resistance, small thermal strain, insusceptibility to damage, light weight, a long service life, and ability to retain oil and grease for a long period of time, thereby providing a high-tech eco-material (state-of-the-art material excellent in ecological adaptability) utilizing biomass resources, different from conventional industrial material.

[0008] The inventors have been successful in development of a porous material suitable for use in fabricating a high-precision bearing retainer, having excellent properties as a material for use in fabricating a bearing retainer, and a small contraction ratio of the dimensions of a formed workpiece to those of a finished product.

[0009] The inventor of the present invention has conducted intense studies, and found out that a porous material is obtained by a process comprising the steps of mixing degreased bran derived from rice bran with a thermosetting resin before kneading, subjecting a kneaded mixture to a primary firing in an inert gas at a temperature in a range of 700 to 1000°C, pulverizing the kneaded mixture obtained after the primary firing into carbonized powders sieved through a 60-mesh screen, mixing the carbonized powders with a thermosetting resin before kneading, pressure-forming a kneaded mixture thus obtained at a pressure in a range of 20 to 30 MPa, and applying a heat treatment again to a formed kneaded mixture in the inert gas at a temperature in a range of 100 to 1100°C, and the porous material thus obtained has not only ideal properties as a material suitable for use in a bearing retainer but also a small contraction ratio of the dimensions of a formed workpiece to those of a finished product.

[0010] More specifically, the porous material described above has the contraction ratio of the dimensions of the formed workpiece to those of the finished product as low as 3% or less, 13 wt % of oil retention characteristic, $4.85 \times 10^{-3} \Omega \text{ cm}$ of volume resistivity, and density in a range of 1.05 to 1.3 g / cm³, and further, it has been possible to obtain the porous material having suitable hardness, and still friction coefficient in the order of about 1.05 after fired at a high temperature.

[0011] Degreased bran derived from rice bran, used in carrying out embodiments of the present invention, may be either of domestic origin or of foreign origin regardless of the kind of rice.

[0012] Further, any thermosetting resin may be used as long as it has thermosetting property, and typically cited as a thermosetting resin are a phenol resin, diaryl phthalate resin, unsaturated polyester resin, epoxy resin, polyimide resin, and triazine resin. In particular, the phenol resin is preferably used.

[0013] Furthermore, a thermoplastic resin such as polyamide, and so forth can be used in combination with a thermosetting resin provided that it is done without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention. A proportion of the thermoplastic resin substituted for a portion of the thermosetting resin to the thermosetting resin is normally not more than 50 parts to 100 parts by weight.

EP 1 215 409 A2

[0014] A mixing ratio of the degreased bran to the thermosetting resin is 50 ~ 90 : 50 ~ 10 by weight, however, a ratio of 75 : 25 is preferably used.

[0015] The thermosetting resin used in this case is preferably in a liquid state, having a relatively small molecular weight.

5 [0016] A primary firing is applied at a temperature in a range of 700 to 1000°C using normally a rotary kiln for a firing time in a range of 40 to 120 minutes.

[0017] A mixing ratio of carbonized powders obtained after the primary firing to the thermosetting resin is 50 ~ 90 : 50 ~ 10 by weight, however, a ratio of 75 : 25 is preferably used.

10 [0018] A kneaded mixture of the carbonized powders after the primary firing and the thermosetting resin is pressure-formed at a pressure in a range of 20 to 30 MPa, preferably in a range of 22 to 25 MPa. A mold is preferably at a temperature of about 150°C.

[0019] The thermoplastic resin can be substituted for a portion of the thermosetting resin, and in such a case, a mixing ratio is normally not more than 50 parts of the thermoplastic resin to 100 parts of the thermosetting resin by weight.

15 [0020] A heat treatment is applied at a temperature in a range of 100 to 1100°C normally in a well-controlled electric furnace. Heat treatment time ranges from about 60 to 360 minutes. A warming rate up to a heat treatment temperature is required to be relatively moderate up to 500°C. In more specific terms, the warming rate is in a range of 0.5 to 2°C / min, preferably 1°C / min.

20 [0021] Further, in lowering temperature after the heat treatment, a relatively moderate cooling rate is required up to 500°C. Upon temperature dropping to 500°C or lower, a formed kneaded mixture is left to cool by itself. In more specific terms, a cooling rate is in a range of 0.5 to 4°C / min, preferably 1°C / min. Furthermore, for an inert gas, any of helium, argon, neon, and nitrogen gas may be used, however, nitrogen gas is preferably used.

[0022] Embodiments of the invention are summed up as follows:

25 (1) a porous material suitable for use in a bearing retainer, obtained by a process comprising the steps of mixing degreased bran derived from rice bran with a thermosetting resin before kneading, subjecting a kneaded mixture to a primary firing in an inert gas at a temperature in a range of 700 to 1000°C, pulverizing the kneaded mixture obtained after the primary firing into carbonized powders sieved through a 60-mesh screen, mixing the carbonized powders with the thermosetting resin before kneading, pressure-forming a kneaded mixture thus obtained at a pressure in a range of 20 to 30 MPa, and applying a heat treatment again to a formed kneaded mixture in the inert gas at a temperature in a range of 100 to 1100°C;

(2) the porous material suitable for use in the bearing retainer as described under item (1) above, wherein the thermosetting resin is one kind or not less than two kinds selected from the group consisting of a phenol resin, diaryl phthalate resin, unsaturated polyester resin, epoxy resin, polyimide resin, and triazine resin;

30 (3) the porous material suitable for use in the bearing retainer as described under item (1) or (2) above, wherein a mixing ratio of the degreased bran to the thermosetting resin is 50 ~ 90 : 50 ~ 10 by weight;

(4) the porous material suitable for use in the bearing retainer as described under any one of items (1) to (3) above, wherein a mixing ratio of the carbonized powders to the thermosetting resin is 50 ~ 90 : 50 ~ 10 by weight;

35 (5) the porous material suitable for use in the bearing retainer as described under any one of items (1) to (4) above, wherein a particle size of the carbonized powders is in a range of 50 to 250 µm;

(6) the porous material suitable for use in the bearing retainer as described under any one of items (1) to (5) above, wherein the thermosetting resin mixed with the degreased bran is in a liquid state, and the thermosetting resin mixed with the carbonized powders is in a solid state;

40 (7) a process of producing a porous material suitable for use in a bearing retainer, comprising the steps of mixing degreased bran derived from rice bran with a thermosetting resin before kneading, subjecting a kneaded mixture to a primary firing in an inert gas at a temperature in a range of 700 to 1000°C, pulverizing the kneaded mixture obtained after the primary firing into carbonized powders sieved through a 60-mesh screen, mixing the carbonized powders with a thermosetting resin before kneading, pressure-forming a kneaded mixture thus obtained at a pressure in a range of 20 to 30 MPa, applying a heat treatment again to a formed kneaded mixture in the inert gas at a temperature in a range of 100 to 1100°C, and cooling the formed kneaded mixture at a moderate cooling rate;

45 (8) the process of producing a porous material suitable for use in the bearing retainer, as described under item (7) above, wherein the moderate cooling rate is in a range of 1 to 4°C / min up to 500°C;

(9) the process of producing a porous material suitable for use in the bearing retainer, as described under item (7) or (8) above, wherein the primary firing is applied in a rotary kiln; and

50 (10) the process of producing a porous material suitable for use in the bearing retainer, as described under any one of items (7) to (9) above, wherein the inert gas is nitrogen gas.

EP 1 215 409 A2

Embodiments

[0023] The invention is described in further detail hereinafter based on preferred embodiments.

(Examples 1 to 7 of the process of producing the porous material for use in the bearing retainer)

5 [0024] 75 g of degreased bran derived from rice bran was mixed and kneaded with 25 g of a phenol resin (resol) in a liquid state while heating both at a temperature in a range of 50 ~ 60°C. A homogeneous mixture having plasticity was thereby obtained.

10 [0025] The mixture was then fired at 900°C in a nitrogen atmosphere inside a rotary kiln for 60 minutes. A carbonized fired mixture thus obtained was pulverized by use of a crusher, and subsequently, was sieved through a screen of 60-mesh, thereby obtaining carbonized powders of particle size in a range of 50 ~ 250 µm.

15 [0026] 75 g of the carbonized powders thus obtained was mixed and kneaded with 25 g of a phenol resin (resol) in a solid state while heating both at a temperature in a range of 100 ~ 150°C. A homogeneous mixture having plasticity was thereby obtained.

20 [0027] Subsequently, a plastic mixture was pressure-formed into the shape of a retainer at a pressure of 22 MPa. A mold was at a temperature of 150°C.

[0028] A formed mixture was taken out of the mold, heated in a nitrogen atmosphere at a warming rate of 1°C / min up to 500°C, held at 500°C for 60 min, and sintered at 900°C for about 120 min.

25 [0029] Subsequently, the temperature of the formed mixture was lowered at a cooling rate in a range of 2 to 3°C / min up to 500°C, and upon the temperature dropping to 500°C or lower, the formed mixture was left to cool by itself.

30 [0030] Table 1 shows various conditions of the process of producing the porous material for use in the bearing retainer.

Table 1

	ex. 1	ex. 2	ex. 3	ex. 4	ex. 5	ex. 6	ex. 7	conv. ex.
25 mix. amt. (g) degr'd bran t-sett. resin	75	75	75	80	60	55	85	75
	25	25	25	20	40	35	15	25
30 prim. firing (°C) time (min)	900	900	900	850	1000	1000	800	-
	60	60	60	60	70	70	60	-
35 aver. particle size (µm)	90	90	90	40	120	50	130	-
	25	25	25	25	25	20	15	-
40 form. press. MPa	21.5	22.5	24.5	23.5	29.5	20.5	23.5	23.5
	120	100	130	120	100	90	120	120
45 heat treat. (°C) firing time (hr.)	900	200	300	800	1000	1100	900	900
	120	100	130	120	100	90	120	120
warm. rate	1	1.5	1	1.5	2	1	1	1
cool. rate	2	left to cool	left to cool	2	3	2	2	2
atm.	nitrogen	nitrogen	nitrogen	nitrogen	nitrogen	nitrogen	nitrogen	nitrogen

Remarks:

a unit of a warming rate and a cooling rate, respectively, is °C / min.

abbreviation:

ex. 1 = example 1; conv. ex. = conventional example; mix. amt. = mixed amount; degr'd bran = degreased bran; t-sett. resin = thermosetting resin; c. powder = carbonized powders; form. press. = forming pressure; heat treat. = heat treatment temperature; warm. rate = warming rate; and cool. rate = cooling rate. "left to cool" means "left to cool by itself".

[0031] Table 2 shows properties of the porous material suitable for use in the bearing retainer, produced according to the examples of production, 1 to 7, and a conventional example.

EP 1 215 409 A2

Table 2

	ex. 1	ex. 2	ex. 3	ex. 4	ex. 5	ex. 6	ex. 7	conv. ex.
5	d. c. ratio (%)	2.0	2.5	2.4	1.9	1.8	1.75	1.25
10	c. s. (MPa)	103	150	140	95	110	115	95
15	oil ret. wt %	13.3	9.8	10.0	14.1	12.8	12.8	14.5
20	vol. res'st. ($10^{-3} \Omega \text{ cm}$)	4.85	49.0	47.5	6.2	5.9	3.1	4.9
25	fr'ctn coeff. (μ)	0.15	0.18	0.16	0.19	0.21	0.13	0.15
30	hyg'oscop. wt %	2.5	1.7	1.8	2.0	2.1	2.1	2.9

Remarks:

15 d. c. ratio (dimensional contraction ratio) = (a length of a formed workpiece - a length of a formed product after firing) / (a length of the formed workpiece) x 100 (%).

abbreviation:

ex. 1 = example 1 of production

conv. ex. = conventional example; c. s. = compressive strength;

20 oil ret. = oil retention characteristic; vol. res'st = volume resistivity; fr'ctn coeff. = friction coefficient; and hyg'oscop. = hygroscopicity.

[0032] Compressive strength was measured by conducting tests on testpieces in a columnar shape of 5 mm (diameter) x 12.5 mm (height). Oil retention characteristic is indicated by a ratio of weight of lubricating oil to that of the testpiece as measured by means of centrifugal separation of the lubricating oil from the testpiece impregnated with the lubricating oil as deaerated at 1150 rpm for 45 seconds. Hygroscopicity was measured by heating the testpiece at 150°C for 6 hours, and treating the same in a vacuum desiccator for 20 hours before leaving the same in a room at room temperature for 72 hours.

[0033] Table 3 shows friction coefficient.

Table 3

load	50 Hz
10 N *	0.19 - 0.26
50 N *	0.33 - 0.4
10 N #	0.16 - 0.22
50 N #	0.27 - 0.34
Remarks:	
* without lubricating oil; # with lubricating oil	

[0034] Tests were conducted on a retainer fabricated based on the example 1. Friction coefficient was found by use of a SRV tester at 1 mm stroke at room temperature, using a steel ball 10 mm in diameter, and applying a load either 10N or 50N.

45 Conventional Example

[0035] 75 g of degreased bran derived from rice bran was mixed and kneaded with 0.5 g of water and 25 g of a phenol resin (resol) in a liquid state, a mixture was dried, and a plastic mixture thus obtained was pressure-formed into the shape of a bearing retainer at a pressure of 22 MPa. A mold was at a temperature of 150°C.

50 [0036] A formed mixture was taken out of the mold, heated in a nitrogen atmosphere at a warming rate of 1°C / min up to 500°C, and sintered at 900°C for about 120 min.

[0037] Subsequently, the temperature of the formed mixture was lowered at a cooling rate in a range of 2 to 3°C / min up to 500°C, and upon the temperature dropping to 500°C or lower, the formed mixture was left to cool by itself. Table 2 shows properties thereof.

55 [0038] Thus, it has been confirmed that the porous material suitable for use in the bearing retainer according to the invention has novel properties not observed of the conventional material, such as a small contraction ratio of the dimensions of a formed workpiece to those of a finished product, excellent hot oil resistance, small thermal strain, in-

EP 1 215 409 A2

susceptibility to damage, light weight, a long service life, and still ability to retain oil and grease for a long period of time.
[0039] The features disclosed in the foregoing description and in the claims may, both separately and in any combination thereof, be material for realising the invention in diverse forms thereof.

5

Claims

1. A porous material suitable for use in a bearing retainer, obtained by a process comprising the steps of mixing
10 degreased bran derived from rice bran with a thermosetting resin before kneading, subjecting a kneaded mixture to a primary firing in an inert gas at a temperature in a range of 700 to 1000°C, pulverizing the kneaded mixture obtained after the primary firing into carbonized powders sieved through a 60-mesh screen, mixing the carbonized powders with a thermosetting resin before kneading, pressure-forming a kneaded mixture thus obtained at a pressure in a range of 20 to 30 MPa, and applying a heat treatment again to a formed kneaded mixture in the inert gas at a temperature in a range of 100 to 1100°C.
- 15 2. A porous material suitable for use in a bearing retainer according to claim 1, wherein the thermosetting resin is one kind or not less than two kinds selected from the group consisting of a phenol resin, diaryl phthalate resin, unsaturated polyester resin, epoxy resin, polyimide resin, and triazine resin.
- 20 3. A porous material suitable for use in a bearing retainer according to claim 1 or claim 2, wherein a mixing ratio of the degreased bran to the thermosetting resin is 50 ~ 90 : 50 ~ 10 by weight.
- 25 4. A porous material suitable for use in a bearing retainer as set forth in any one of claims 1 to 3, wherein a mixing ratio of the carbonized powders to the thermosetting resin is 50 ~ 90 : 50 ~ 10 by weight.
5. A porous material suitable for use in a bearing retainer as set forth in any one of claims 1 to 4, wherein a particle size of the carbonized powders is in a range of 50 to 250 µm.
- 30 6. A porous material suitable for use in a bearing retainer as set forth in any one of claims 1 to 5, wherein the thermosetting resin mixed with the degreased bran is in a liquid state, and the thermosetting resin mixed with the carbonized powders is in a solid state.

36

40

45

50

55